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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 14 April 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

In the course of consideration of items 10, 9 and 12 of the agenda of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights, the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan has circulated appalling letters contained in documents E/CN.4/1998/131, 140, 151 and 154. This massive attack represents a standard product of the Azerbaijani propaganda machinery which seems not to have any limits to its creativity.

Being very low in quality and cheap in contents these letters have been designed by the Azerbaijani Government with the objective of discrediting Armenia and Nagorny-Karabakh during the Commission's present session by misleading the international community through impressive falsifications and defamatory facts and figures. The cynicism of the way in which it is done is frightening in its simplicity.

My delegation regrets the fact that Azerbaijan does not cease playing the game of projecting the image of victim of the so-called "Armenian aggression". The events of Khodjaly reflected in documents E/CN.4/1998/140 and 154 are the pinnacle of the Azeri allegations.

The delegation of Armenia would comment on this by referring to the interview of the President of Azerbaijan, Aiaz Mutalibov, with Czech journalist Dana Mazalova published in the 2 April 1992 issue of the Russian newspaper Nizavisimaya Gazeta. The President of Azerbaijan stated that the militia of the Azerbaijani National Front (ANF) actively obstructed and actually prevented the evacuation of the local civilian population from the zone of military operations through the mountain passages specifically left open by Karabakh Armenians.

The hope and intention of the Azerbaijani opposition was to utilize civilian losses of such a magnitude as to instigate a popular uprising against the Baku regime and seize the reins of power.

In a Helsinki Watch report of September 1992 an Azerbaijani woman is quoted as confirming that Armenians had advised the Azerbaijani civilian population to leave the town with white flags raised. In fact, the Azerbaijani militia shot those who attempted to flee.

To further clarify the issue, let us note that the international community has already witnessed and confirmed the countless atrocities of the Azerbaijani Government towards the defenceless Armenian population.

Ten years ago, in 1988, as a response to a peaceful and constitutional demand of the Nagorny-Karabakh people to exercise its right to self-determination, the Azeri authorities organized an armed mob which launched pogroms against Armenians living in the Azeri city of Sumgait. These massacres were the first acts of mass killings on the territory of the former Soviet Union, as documented by the criminal proceedings launched by the Soviet authorities. Immediately after declaring its independence, Azerbaijan freed the accused murderers and openly saluted them as national heroes in the mass media.

A Helsinki Watch report of the time testifies that "these events were intended to exacerbate the fear and horror of ethnic Armenians in the other parts of Azerbaijan". Massacres in Ganja, Baku and other cities between 1988 and 1991 were far more barbaric and massive, leading to the deportation and ethnic cleansing of about half a million Armenians.

These atrocities were followed by unprecedented Azeri military offensives and operations designed to implement a military solution by annihilating the Nagorny-Karabakh population. It has to be finally and forever clarified that it was Azerbaijan which started an armed aggression against Nagorny-Karabakh.

Armenia is convinced that by far the better solution would be the restoration of the fundamental and lawful rights of the 250,000 Armenians living in the Nagorny-Karabakh region by addressing their constitutional demands for their right to self-determination.

My delegation is reluctant to engage in a "war of letters" and considers the above-mentioned facts as sufficient to conclude.

(Signed) Karen NAZARIAN
Permanent Representative